

Operational Plans – Municipal Drinking Water Licensing Program Submission Options

Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 (SDWA)

Ontario's SDWA is part of a comprehensive legislative framework established by the Ontario government to protect the safety and quality of Ontario's drinking water. Regulations made under the SDWA stipulate the detailed requirements for drinking water systems, testing services, quality standards, certification of drinking water system operators and drinking water quality analysts, as well as compliance and enforcement.

Municipal Drinking Water Licensing Program and Operational Plans

The Municipal Drinking Water Licensing Program is a new approvals framework for municipal residential drinking water systems. Under the program, owners and operating authorities are required to incorporate the concept of quality management into the operations of their drinking water systems. This requirement is facilitated through the Director's Directions: Minimum Requirements for Operational Plans made under the SDWA which require that the processes and procedures of the Drinking Water Quality Management Standard (DWQMS) be detailed in operational plans for each drinking water system.

It is important that owners and operators work cooperatively in the preparation of operational plans. For each drinking water system, owners are required to submit operational plans to the Ministry of the Environment in accordance with the Director's Directions and operating authorities must submit owner endorsed operational plans to the accreditation body as part of the accreditation process.

Submission Options and Timelines

The deadline for the submission of operational plans by system owners is prescribed by the Licensing of Municipal Drinking-Water Systems Regulation, O. Reg. 188/07. Submission deadlines are phased over an 18-month period between January 2009 and June 2010; the order generally requires owners in larger municipalities to submit their operational plans first, followed by medium-sized, then small municipalities.

At the same time the owner submits their operational plan to the ministry, the operating authority should submit their application, including the owner-endorsed operational plan, to the accreditation body.

In response to stakeholders concerns and to ensure adequate development time for operational plans, flexibility has been built into the required content of the plans. The Director's Directions provide three content options, as outlined on the following page.

OPTION	DETAILS
Option # 1: Limited Scope – Partial DWQMS Phased-in documentation and implementation Limited scope accreditation followed by full scope accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an operational plan that documents 12 key elements of the DWQMS and implement them • The operating authority will receive limited scope accreditation based on a successful third-party audit of the documentation and implementation of these 12 key elements • Document and implement the remaining nine elements of the DWQMS and submit an application to the accreditation body for full scope accreditation within 12 months of receiving a certificate of accreditation (limited scope – partial DWQMS) • The operating authority will receive a certificate of accreditation (full scope – entire DWQMS) based on a successful third-party audit of the operational plan and implementation of all DWQMS requirements.
Option # 2: Limited Scope – Entire DWQMS Full documentation Phased-in implementation Limited scope accreditation followed by full scope accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an operational plan that documents 20 elements of the DWQMS • The operating authority will receive limited scope accreditation based on a successful third-party audit of the documented 20 elements of the DWQMS • The operating authority must implement all 21 elements of the DWQMS and submit an application for full scope accreditation within 12 months of receiving a certificate of accreditation (limited scope – entire DWQMS) • The operating authority will receive a certificate of accreditation (full scope – entire DWQMS) based on a successful third-party audit of the operational plan and implementation of all DWQMS requirements.
Option # 3: Full Scope – Entire DWQMS Full documentation and implementation Full scope accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an operational plan that documents all 21 elements of the DWQMS and implement them • The operating authority will receive a certificate of accreditation (full scope – entire DWQMS) based on a successful third-party audit of the operational plan and implementation of all DWQMS requirements.

The information contained here is intended to give general information only and must be read in conjunction with the legislation and regulations that outline specific requirements and procedures. If you have any legal questions about the program or interpretation of the legislation or regulation, you should consult a lawyer.

The Director's Direction: Minimum Requirement for Operational Plans, the Accreditation Protocol: Operating Authorities – Municipal Drinking-Water Systems, the Drinking Water Quality Management Standard and general information on the Municipal Drinking Water Licensing Program can be found on the Drinking Water Ontario portal at www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater or call the Licensing Program Information Centre at 1-877-955-5455 (Toronto area 416-314-1651). Copies of the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002, and the regulations and other instruments made under that Act can be found at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca or call the ministry's Public Information Centre at 1-800-565-4923.